



Ah, the Christmas season – what better time to reflect upon religious experiences? For me, it was eating four warm Krispy Kreme donuts. For Doug, it was learning that the priest who baptized our goddaughter Ali in a Norman Rockwell-type town in NH was led away in handcuffs. He had suspected that the priest was looking at him with undue interest during the ceremony, but apparently Doug was too old for him. Such a sorry situation. But at the Z household, things are still too good to be true.

Our big RV trip/continued honeymoon was to Maine, New Brunswick, and scenic, farm-filled Prince Edward Island. I thought the best part was the Potato Museum. Who knew 85% of potatoes end up as French fries? Doug enjoyed the hurricane (we were the only people in the coastal campground for *that* event). We even tried out some “World Famous” Irish Moss seaweed pie, which unfortunately tasted like green Cool Whip on a Wonderbread crust.

In terms of serious adventure, Doug and buds made their 4th attempt at Mt. Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies. It is highly sought after, but seldom climbed (Everest is summited more often), due to its length, difficulty, and nasty weather. His pack would have been a lot lighter if he'd brought a pillow instead of climbing gear, since they spent 108 hours straight sleeping in confined to their tent during a blizzard, never making it past their high camp on the glacier. The rangers said an unplanned stay of that length without a rescue was a record. They were glad to make it down alive, and to remain friends after the extended shared hibernation experience. Doug and I also did some fun rock climbing in Acadia and here in Connecticut.

We had a number of fallen farm comrades this year: Elizaduck (coyote food); Ducko the Micro-encephalitic (evolutionary forces); Scooter the Dog (oldness—we knew the end was near when he failed to notice that one of the ducks was standing on his head); and Marguerite the Goat (who succumbed to age/overeating. Neighbor Dirk's backhoe came in handy during funeral services), leaving the young pygmy goat we had bought to be Marguerite's pal all alone. The new goat (Peanut) was getting pretty chubby, but we didn't think much of it, since M. had always looked like she had swallowed a 55-gallon drum. I cut back on Peanut's food, but ended up feeling pretty guilty later, when I went out to the barn one afternoon and found her with a little baby goat! Peanut must have been knocked up when we got her, and since the gestation period is 150 days, it was very gradual. We named the kid Macadamia (in keeping with the “nut” theme). I also hatched a duck (Puzzles) from an egg. When everybody is loose, it is the picture of pastoral pandemonium—Lucky the Thug Duck chasing Puzzles the Sissy Duck, who escapes by flying into my arms, while the goats practice summittin Doug's car. Occasionally Mac the Think Tank gets himself wedged behind the wood pile.

We set up a bluebird trail this year, and had our first batch of fledglings. It's easy to become possessed watching these beautiful birds. Speaking of blue, Doug attended a power meeting at work as Smurf-Boy, after dipping his hand into a toilet tank doused with Tidy Bowl while fixing the plumbing. The best part was that he did the exact same thing again two weeks later. I'd write more about me, but I didn't do any stupid sh*t this year.

I continue to be loving the semi-retirement situation, although I have noticed that I don't multi-task as well as I used to. I've gone from six meetings/day to short circuiting if I have to do laundry and make dinner on the same day. I *almost* achieved my goal of working no more than 3-4 months a year, but in November my former boss/mentor asked me to come back to Brookhaven National Lab in Long Island for a 3 month stint, to fill in for a colleague who left. Since my 401k has turned into a 201k, it seemed liked a good idea for about 5 minutes, after which I starting feeling as if I'd been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Doug said I should be more positive, and look at it like being in a body cast short-term. It does mean readjusting to wearing real clothes all day long (vs. PJs) and not getting regular duck/goat play breaks. Woe is me. Doug continues to clean up polluted sites in his 19th year with the CT Dept. of Environmental Protection. He'd like to retire too, but fortunately I thought of it first – he's my source of insurance benefits now.

I took a few classes in stenciling and digital photography this year. Doug is VP of the Woodstock Hysterical [sic] Society, and I've been volunteering for an open space organization and the Conservation Commission (see my first attempt at a website at www.woodstockconservation.org.) Best movie of the year: *Memento* – the story of a person who has no short term memory. It's the story of a person who has no short term memory. Best book: I can't remember. Anyway, we sure hope you have a healthy, safe, and happy holiday and 2003! Please stay in touch!

